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She Slapped Me

Fawaz Alotaibi

“Why? What exactly happened here?” Barca reached Jonnie and softly grabbed him on his back. His hands on Jennie’s back give him some comfort. It’s been two years since Jonnie worked as a servant for Mrs. Dildar but never treated like one. He can be described as a black lean body with a round head and big white eyes like color of boiled milk.

“He is the one responsible for all the wrong doings in my house,” Mrs. Dildar shouted. Mrs. Dildar had given five cups of coffee to Jonnie to take to her four children and her husband. Jonnie belongs to a very poor family but has some servant skills which he gained by working under rich families by the age 11. He is been a servant for six years but didn’t have a single thought that gave him any kind of hope or motivation to move on or to become something else in his life. The only thought he had until now was about his loneliness or his poor fate.

Mrs. Dildar again shouted, “Get him away from my eyes or I will punish him bad”. Barca, who is her first son, held Jonnie’s back and took him to his own room. “What’s the matter with you? Why didn’t you do your job with conscientiously? You don’t have any interest in living with us.” Barca asked. Barca is a man of principles. He thinks that everybody is equally created in this world and everyone has a right to speak on one’s deed and earn his living by one’s own choice.

“It’s not my fault. I didn’t do it.” Jonnie screamed like a four year old child; he lost his consciousness for a time and shaking from fear. What sort of things happened which forced him to think that this might be his last night in this world? He has fearful thoughts just because a single cup of coffee dropped from his hand, but it’s absolutely not a case where he thinks that his

life came to its end. A thought occurred to him: Why does he exist? What is the purpose of his life? Was he born to serve others or work under others' command for his whole life? Is there no opportunity for him to enjoy his life like other fellows his age? Will he be a servant for all his life and get punishment all the time from Mrs. Dildar? Why is there a difference as big as this, where he can't smile while watching a TV show like other children, where he cannot go to a school or see a college gate in his whole life? Why can't he have a choice to earn his own living by choosing a profession which he might think works right for him? All these questions which never arose before now become a source of headaches for him. But why now? Maybe it's in human nature to identify his rights of freedom, living, equality, non-discrimination.

"I don't know what is wrong with him, he must have watching the computer screen while giving the cup to you," Mrs. Dildar said to Baqir, who is her second son.

"Yes, He was" Baqir said to his mother.

"We must punish him for his deeds so he will do his work decently next time," Mrs. Dildar said.

"I will not allow anyone to punish him just because he spilt cup of coffee," Barca said as he entered the room.

Barca now understands the feelings of an 11 year old boy who is confused over his existence. He has so many arguments in his mind to argue with his mother, but he finds this irregular to shout over some servant as it is against his mother's rights. But again a thought passes through his mind that if he shuts his mouth just because he thinks that it is against his mother's wishes, than it will be improper to find that boy guilty who find his life worthless because he does not know even his rights of living. Barca turns to his mother.

“Did it ever pass in your mind when you slapped him that he might be your own child who gest slapped by someone who is allowed just because he is rich and your son is poor? Did you think of why he was watching the computer screen while giving the cup to Baqir? He is watching because he finds the screen’s brightness interesting enough and it is his right to see what he can see and eat what he can eat to survive or do legal doings to earn his living. With respect, Mother, you need to understand that these are his moral rights because he is a human like us, not a caged animal. It is our duty to make him believe in his life by giving him those rights because I believe recognizing those rights as our moral duty, not because he is living with us, but because it’s our national duty.”

Jonnie listened to the kind words of Barca. For him those words mattered; he feels like he has been born again. Barca’s speech astounds him. He thinks he is given another chance and this time it’s a chance worth living where he finds an aim to recognize his rights and earn them.